

Youth Services Bureau

CURRENT:

The Youth Services Bureau Court Diversion Program provides effective alternatives to court-involvement for first time juvenile offenders. To be eligible, a youth must admit to having committed the offense that he/she is charged with and be willing to take full responsibility for it. Staff members help the youth to reflect on the effects of his/her behavior on self and others.

In 2003, two Alton youths were referred to the Court Diversion Program. Both youth completed the program successfully and did not require court involvement to address their offense.

In addition to the Court Diversion Program, residents of Alton also have access to the other services and programs of the Youth Services Bureau which include:

- **Parent/child Mediation:** An affordable, confidential process that provides families with an opportunity to address issues that are contributing to conflict in the home. Mediations sessions are facilitated by a team of trained mediators and give families tools for effective communication and help them to gain insight into each other's needs. One Alton family received Parent-child mediation services in 2003.
- **Upswing:** An intervention program for families who have a child in danger of entering the court system under a CHINS (Child In Need of Services) Petition. The program meets with family members to determine needs, helps families access needed services in the community, and is offered at no cost.
- **Challenge:** An early intervention drug and alcohol education course, which aims to intervene and curtail further involvement with substances for youth who have encountered trouble for the first time in which drugs and/or alcohol have played a part. Other issues such as high-risk behaviors, STD's, and decision-making are also addressed. One Alton youth participated in Challenge in 2003.

NEW:

Take Control! A psycho-educational treatment program for middle school youth who have experienced difficulty in controlling their emotions. The purpose of the program is to help teenagers learn how to recognize their thoughts and identify their feelings and to gain the necessary skills to express their thoughts and feelings in a more healthy and productive manner. Referrals will be accepted beginning in February 2005, with the first group scheduled to take place during the spring of 2005.

Anger Management: A psycho-educational program, based on the Anger Control Training curriculum. This program will aim to help high school youth learn to deal with their anger in a healthy, non-destructive way. Participants will learn: 1) to recognize the specific thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which can contribute to feelings of anger and aggression 2) healthy coping skills to reduce and change their negative behavior 3) how to replace aggressive behavior with assertiveness. Referrals will be accepted late spring/early summer 2005.

Prime for Life: PRIME For Life Under 21 is a curriculum for youth ages 13-20 who are engaged in high-risk drinking or drug use or who are in a group that is likely to begin making choices that increase risk for problems. The curriculum teaches the phases of drinking and drug use in such a way that the adolescents' experiences with alcohol and other drugs are re-framed. This re-framing often leads young people to see, for the first time, how their use is truly endangering their well being and the things that they value most in their lives. Once defenses are reduced, the participants are guided through a self-assessment of their level of use and problems, and are encouraged to seek appropriate counseling and/or treatment when necessary. Referrals will be accepted beginning in March 2005.

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Director